Jos: Jekyll Rye

THE SIN OF WASTEFULNESS;

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

PARISH CHURCH

OF

ST. VEDAST FOSTER,

ON JANUARY 17, 1796,

AFTER READING THE LETTER OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, &c. RECOMMENDING A REDUCTION IN THE CONSUMPTION OF WHEAT.

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By WILLIAM AGUTTER, A.M.

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JOHN VI. 12.

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN, THAT NOTHING BE LOST.

HE who is the Giver of all Good, who *openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs*, can never approve of waſte; for it implies a diſregard of his bounty, a forgetfulneſs of our daily dependance and numerous obligations to Him.

The Lord in the days of his fleſh fed five thouſand with five barley loaves and two ſmall fiſhes. He pronounced the bleſſing, and his bleſſing produced abundance. In his divine hands the loaves and fiſhes multiplied. The *great company* partook of the fruits of immediate creation. There was bread enough and to ſpare, and yet the divine Giver adds, *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be loſt.*

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This command is always important, but it may be more neceſſary at ſome periods, particularly when we are threatened with ſcarcity. Then the duty is urgent; gather up the fragments that remain. Huſband them to the beſt advantage. Deal them out ſparingly, that they may laſt the longer time. Here true policy and true religion go hand in hand. The love of our country, and the regard to God and man ſuggeſt the ſame line of conduct in ſuch emergencies, quietly to acquieſce under the afflictive diſpenſation, and to leſſen the calamity by all the means in our power.

He who giveth, likewiſe withholdeth. *The times and the ſeaſons*, the winds and the rains, are *in His hands*. Man may exert his utmoſt powers, and yet not ſecure himſelf from want. He has no creative powers. He may till the ground, and ſow the ſeed; he muſt *wait for the early and latter rain*; but all his labour will be in vain, all his hopes periſh, unleſs God *giveth the increaſe*.

Scarcity, then, is an afflictive diſpenſation of God, ſent to humble the pride, to cure the luxury, or to point out the danger of

of individuals or nations. It is a ſevere but kind diſcipline, calculated to correct, to puniſh and amend: to rouſe them to the ſenſe of their duty, and the acknowledgment of their dependance: therefore to repine againſt, to reſiſt ſuch diſpenſations, is really to quarrel with Providence, and to fight againſt GOD. Diſcontent increaſes the evils under which we ſuffer, whilſt it deprives us of the means of making them leſs. *In vain do the potſherds of the earth ſtrive with their Maker.* Are we ſtronger than He? But by meek ſubmiſſion, by ſeeing the rod, and who has appointed, we learn to bear it as Chriſtians, and to derive ſpiritual benefits from temporal calamities.

Let us then conſider, particularly at this time, the great ſin of Waſtefulneſs, and the various ways in which it is practiſed.

Waſte proceeds from ignorance, ingratitude and unthankfulneſs, from luxury, and want of compaſſion. Man could not waſte the bounties of Heaven, if he conſidered his obligations to GOD, or the various wants and neceſſities of his fellow creatures. He who waſtes, forgets that he is a dependent

and accountable ſervant, and ſeems only willing to live for himſelf, to pamper his appetite, to indulge his eaſe, and to think no more of others.

The more we indulge, the more indulgence we require: he who fares ſumptuouſly every day, will be but ill able to relinquiſh his needleſs abundance, and to enjoy the comfort of plainer food.

Nature is ſoon ſatisfied; the real purpoſes of health, ſtrength and activity do not require much. He, then, who eats more than is requiſite for theſe purpoſes, is guilty of waſte. He heedleſsly conſumes what does himſelf no good, and what many really want. The table of luxury, and the coſtly variety of unneceſſary food, is a ſtrong temptation to exceed the bounds of rational temperance. By being habitually repleniſhed, the ſprings of life are impeded, the ſeeds of diſeaſes are nouriſhed, the humours become groſs: man enjoys himſelf leſs, and is leſs uſeful in the world.

The purpoſes of our well being are beſt anſwered by plain and ſimple food [A]: they, then, are guilty of waſte who refine

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on the arts of luxury, and who deſtroy much wholeſome meat by reducing it to a very ſmall compaſs to pleaſe their vitiated palate, and to inſtigate their languid appetite.

The rites of hoſpitality and ſociety will always require a due attention to our friends; yet in times of ſcarcity there can be no excuſe for providing a needleſs abundance; a ſuperfluity of diet, a rich variety of dainties, become a waſte. All ſecond courſes partake ſo much of luxury, parade and indulgence, that they are never neceſſary, and at ſuch times ought to be omitted. When ſervants obſerve an unneceſſary profuſion at your table, it is a great temptation to them to conſume more than is requiſite. You cannot expect that they ſhould be careful, where you are extravagant. It would be well, where the maſters are rationally frugal, if the ſervants would follow their example.

In times of general or particular ſcarcity, it is neceſſary to omit ſome articles of food which may neither be luxurious or extravagant in themſelves, but which would conſume too much of the article moſt wanted;

in which caſe it is wiſe and patriotic to reſtrain where we can; and to be moderate and very temperate, where we cannot altogether reſtrain. This, indeed, may be the more difficult in the caſe of plain and common food which has been in very general uſe, but neceſſity abſolutely demands it: wiſdom and piety will eaſily make the ſacrifice, which habit ſoon reconciles, and conſcience will approve.

Domeſtic animals require a proper ſupport, yet care muſt be taken that in feeding them we do not diminiſh or waſte that food which would ſupport our fellow creatures; if ſo, we are guilty of waſte in giving to the brute beaſt what might be juſtly demanded for the comfort or the wants of mankind [B].

All who have it in their power, ſhould endeavour to prevent waſte. The inattention of ſome heads of families does much miſchief. Servants are left too much to themſelves: abuſes creep in by degrees: when they are firmly eſtabliſhed, they can hardly be removed. No one ſhould be above looking into their own affairs; for if

they

they are bound to prevent waſtefulneſs themſelves, they are alſo bound to prevent it in others to the beſt of their power. A regular ſuperintendance over domeſtic œconomy, and an attention to cleanlineſs in every department, will be found the beſt means to prevent increaſing waſte, and to correct it where it is introduced.

Servants, as men and as Chriſtians, are not only generally concerned in the above remarks, but there are ſome particulars more immediately applicable to them.

They ſhould have the ſame care of their maſter's property as they would have of their own; they muſt do as they would be done unto. In them all luxury, exceſs and waſte is a ſpecies of diſhoneſty, a ſort of daily robbery. They may eaſily learn what the family they live with is pleaſed to allow, and all that they aſſume beyond this is certainly wrong. The ſituation, the age, the fortune and family of their maſters and miſtreſſes may debar the ſervants of ſome indulgencies which others enjoy, may prudently deprive them of company, or allow them to give but little proviſion away. It

is your duty in theſe particulars ſtrictly to conform. It is but a poor plea for charity, very falſely ſo called, which is to be exerted by an act of diſobedience. Beggars may be fed, or your acquaintance indulged; you may be flattered as generous, but at the expence of your maſter's property, and the riſque of his diſpleaſure.

In vain do you urge that "he is rich, that "he can well afford it, or that he will never "find it out." It may be ſo; but concealment implies criminality: he alone is the beſt judge of what he can really afford. You cannot know his income, and what are the various claims, if not the juſt demands upon him from relations, friends, and charities. You have no right to be the almoner of his benevolence, unleſs he has commiſſioned you ſo to do. Under the poor ſemblance of a virtue, you are doing what is wrong; you are indulging a thoughtleſs exceſs, a prodigal waſte. You feed indolence, and call it charity; you pamper luxury, and call it friendſhip.

Every vice brings its own puniſhment with it. Every ſtep in ſin is a ſtep in ſorrow.

row. He who waſtes muſt probably be reduced to want; when calamity is come upon him as an armed man, when he begins to be in want, how bitterly will he lament the days of his proſperity, how ſeverely will he feel the conſequences of his folly; what would he then give for thoſe meals which he has eaten in waſte, for thoſe proviſions which were conſumed only to indulge his appetite, and to deprave his nature. The more luxurioufly we live, the leſs ſhall we be able to ſtruggle with misfortunes, *to endure hardſhips as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt.* Indulgence enervates both body and ſoul; and when this is the caſe, affliction falls on us with a double weight.

The conduct which may be abſolutely neceſſary at one time, is a matter of indifference or of choice at another. In general, kindneſs will prompt us to diſtribute bread in abundance; but the ſame kindneſs, guided by wiſdom, will now direct us to be ſparing of it, and to deal it out to the beſt advantage. At the ſame time the current of our bounty will not ſtop; we ſhall feel for the hardſhips of the labouring

poor, and be happy in ſupplying them with various ſubſtitutes inſtead of bread.

To prevent miſchief is the higheſt wiſdom to man, is the beſt uſe of his rational powers; nay, ſome animals ſeem to have a ſort of wiſe forethought, and make proviſion againſt the time to come.

You have heard from the firſt authority that there is a ſcarcity of bread-corn [C]; if, then, means are not uſed to reduce the conſumption of it conſiderably before we can gather the fruits of the earth in the next harveſt, this ſcarcity may produce a famine of bread, and a famine of bread muſt enhance all the neceſſaries of life; the cry then will be, "Who would have thought it, and I wiſh I had retrenched in time." A wiſe and good man will do that from choice, which another may be compelled to do from neceſſity; he will be thankful for what he has, rather than repine at what he has given up [D].

If we refuſe to follow the example, or to comply with the recommendation of our ſuperiors in this time of need, it will abundantly prove that we have loſt all ſenſe of virtue

virtue by the love of ſenſuality; all care of the future in the indulgence of the preſent moment; all love of your country, by increaſing it's calamity and danger; all true charity for man, by not eaſing his affliction when you have it in your power; all regard to your GOD and Saviour, by wantonly augmenting his providential diſpenſation.

If by a continuance of inclement ſeaſons; if by a thoughtleſs exceſs and practical epicuriſm, which ſays, "Let me feaſt "to-day, if I ſtarve to-morrow: I will not "reſtrain more than others: I will indulge in "white bread, and fine wheaten bread while "it is to be procured."—If inſtead of being humbled and amended by the divine judgment, we become indifferent, hard-hearted and head-ſtrong, then it is more than probable, that our *calamity* may be *of long continuance*, the SCARCITY may be converted into FAMINE.

Shall I dwell on the miſery of ſuch a ſituation only to inſtigate you to uſe all the means in your power to prevent it? When a famine is *ſore* in the land, then high and low, the prince and the peaſant ſuffer together. Riches are no defence, rank is no

protection. The ſtrength of a kingdom becomes it's burden. The means of ſocial comforts only open ſo many new avenues of diſtreſs to the feeling mind. Man's wants are daily; and the ſcanty ſupply of bad proviſions ſcarce anſwer the demands of nature. Hoſpitality and cheerfulneſs are baniſhed from the table: the hand of charity is ſtopt, while the neceſſities of the poor, the aged and the afflicted rapidly increaſe. Hunger rouſes and ſharpens the angry paſſions. Such periods have been always marked by the additional calamity of robbers, formidable from their numbers and their cruelty.

At this time in particular we ſhould have more to apprehend: the deſperately factious and ambitious would take advantage of the national diſtreſs, would encourage the general ill humour, and attempt to caſt all the blame on government [E].

Hear how the Prophet bewails ſuch an affliction. *The precious ſons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they eſteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. Even the ſea-monſters draw out the breaſt, they give ſuck to their young ones, but the daughter*

daughter of my people is become like the oſtrich in the wilderneſs. The tongue of the ſucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirſt; the young children aſk bread, and no man breaketh it unto them: the children and the ſucklings ſwoon in the gates of the city. They ſay to their mothers, where is corn and wine? when they ſwooned as the wounded in the ſtreets of the city, when their ſoul was poured out into their mother's boſom. They that did feed delicately are deſolate, they that were brought up in ſcarlet embrace dunghills. They that be ſlain with the ſword, are better than they that be ſlain with hunger, for theſe pine away, being ſtricken through for want of the fruit of the field. Peſtilence follows after, and afflicts the remainder whom famine has ſpared.

Theſe are the ſore judgments of the Almighty on guilty nations; theſe are the natural conſequences of luxury and tranſgreſſions. Power belongeth unto God. In his hands the weakeſt inſtruments become formidable. He calleth for the blaſt, the mildew, the caterpillar and the fly, and they obey Him. *A fruitful land maketh He barren for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein.*

therein. When God ſtrikes, man muſt feel; and if he has a true regard for himſelf, will repent and amend.

May then the deſolations of famine and peſtilence never viſit us: may we be preſerved in peace, and again be bleſſed with plenty: if we have ſeen the gathering ſtorm, and the rod uplifted, let us turn unto God, while yet it is the acceptable time. Let us beware how we provoke Him, leſt He ſhould *take away the* WHOLE *ſtaff of bread*, and make us *ſick with famine*, and then leave us in the hands of our own councils, to reap that miſery which always is produced by folly and impiety.

Let us alſo retrench in the conſumption of wheat as much as we can. Let every maſter of a family ſet the example himſelf, and explain the neceſſity of this reduction to thoſe of his houſehold. *There are yet* MANY *months before the harveſt comes:* the crops of the two laſt years were not large, and the granaries of Europe were exhauſted. A large part of the produce of laſt year is returned to the earth again as ſeed corn, with the hopes of abundance. All theſe things

things prove the abſolute neceſſity of conſiderable reductions, that we may weather this ſtorm, that we may eke out the remainder of our proviſion, and thus it may laſt us until *the appointed weeks of the harveſt.*

Let, then, the love of CHRIST conſtrain us to make this reaſonable ſacrifice to the general welfare of our country; to the relief of the poor and the diſtreſſed. *Whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of* GOD. Whatever your ſtation in life may be, you know that it is your bounden duty to prevent all the miſchief, to do all the good, you poſſibly can.

Do not ſay that this is a mere trifle, that you are only one among millions, and therefore it may be ſafely diſregarded. The good effect to be expected is from the union and the perſeverance of numbers. Every day much may be ſaved, therefore every day the means of tranquillity and comfort are ſecured.

Perhaps you may be offended with ſome who either have broken a ſolemn engagement, or who will put no reſtraint on their luxury and exceſs; but *follow not a multitude*

to do evil. Be thou faithful in that which is little. If we are guided by the wiſdom of eternity, we ſhall make a conſcience of the whole of our conduct, and we ſhall have no reaſon to be aſhamed of our choice.

Let us then receive the friendly warning, and learn to grow in heavenly wiſdom by repenting wherever we have done wrong; by living in a ſtate of conſtant dependance on GOD; by practiſing a daily ſelf-denial on Chriſtian principles; by adoring the Great Giver, while we receive his gifts; by making our ſacrifices of temperance adminiſter to the neceſſities of others. From temporal calamities we may derive ſpiritual improvement. The affliction which diſtreſſes the body, may purify and elevate the ſoul. However it may appear to the eye of ſenſe while ſuffering under the chaſtiſing rod, yet of this we are certain, that there is a ſuperabounding good deſigned, in the divine intent. Every judgment is directed by mercy. *Thy loving corrections have made me great. Behold, then, happy is the man, happy is the nation whom* GOD *correcteth, therefore deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Almighty:*

mighty: for He maketh ſore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and his hands make whole: He ſhall deliver thee in ſix troubles, yea in ſeven there ſhall no evil touch thee. In FAMINE *He ſhall redeem thee from death, and in war, from the power of the ſword.*

APPEN-

APPENDIX.

[A] THE objections urged againſt mixed Bread, ſeem to proceed from ignorance on the ſubject, or a falſe benevolence. It is a certain fact, that the moſt numerous and laborious parts of the community in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, principally ſubſiſt on barley, or oats, or potatoes.

[B] The number of horſes kept of late years may be conſidered as an increaſing evil. They conſume much of the produce of the ground. Oxen would anſwer all the purpoſes of hard labour and agriculture; they conſume much leſs, and are uſeful for man's ſubſiſtence when their labour is over. The late tax on working horſes will prove a national benefit, if their number ſhould leſſen, and their place be ſupplied in the plough and the team by oxen.—Men of diſtinguiſhed rank and fortune may have expenſive amuſements, but when we hear

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of ſome thouſands every year being ſpent on one pack of dogs, it is but natural to ſuſpect that there muſt be much waſte of food; and ſurely we may lament when ſuch a ſum of money, if judiciouſly directed, might find employment, and thus beſtow comforts on numerous poor families.

[c] See the order of the Privy Council, the Letter of the Archbiſhop of Canterbury, and the unanimous Reſolutions of both Houſes of Parliament.—Extracts from his Grace's Letter. "From enquiries proſecuted in every poſſible way, and from the moſt ſolemn and laborious inveſtigation of the ſubject, there is too much reaſon to believe, that the crops of wheat in the two laſt years, have fallen far ſhort of what is called the medium. No means have been left untried, no exertions ſpared, to make good the deficiency by importation. But the general failure of the crops, both on the continent of Europe, and in America, makes it impoſſible to obtain an adequate ſupply. Such is the real ſtate of the caſe, which it can anſwer no good purpoſe to diſguiſe. And the inevitable conſequence muſt

muſt be, if the conſumption of wheat goes on at the uſual rate, that the whole ſtock of the kingdom will be exhauſted long before the next harveſt can be gathered in, or be even ripe for gathering.

" To prevent a calamity ſo much to be dreaded, there ſeems to be no reſource or remedy by any human means, but in a reduction of the ordinary conſumption of wheat by all families and individuals in the higher and middle claſſes of life. By ſuch a reduction a larger quantity will be left for the uſe of the indigent and laborious claſſes, who have not the means of procuring for themſelves other kinds of ſuſtenance. And to ſo ſmall a ſacrifice of what may well be ſpared, in favour and for the aid of thoſe who cannot be deprived of it without extreme diſtreſs, what motive can be wanting? It will be praiſe-worthy in every view of morality, policy, and Chriſtian charity, and it will recommend us to the favour and protection of Almighty GOD, the creator and preſerver of men, who alone can reſtore to us the bleſſings of peace."

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[D] I find it the general wiſh of all I have converſed with, that a Law ſhould paſs, only allowing mixed Bread to be made with two thirds of wheat flour. While a finer ſort is to be procured, ſome from obſtinacy or luxury will obtain it. Neceſſity would juſtify the meaſure; which is particularly recommended to Parliament by the Common Council of the City of London.

[E] See the account of a very dreadful ſtorm in France, July 13th, 1788. It produced a local ſcarcity, and this conſiderably added to the embarraſſments of Government.—Annual Regiſter for 1789, Vol. xxxi. p. 29—31.

FINIS.

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